

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 18, 1990

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DOLE INTRODUCES COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE WAIVER BILL; CHANGES NEEDED TO ASSIST AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

MR. PRESIDENT. I AM PROUD TO JOIN THE DISTINGUISHED SENATOR FROM MONTANA, SENATOR BURNS, AS AN ORIGINAL CO-SPONSOR OF LEGISLATION THAT WOULD PERMIT STATES TO WAIVE APPLICATION OF THE COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT OF 1986 WITH RESPECT TO VEHICLES USED TO TRANSPORT FARM SUPPLIES FROM RETAIL DEALERS TO OR FROM A FARM, AND TO VEHICLES USED FOR CUSTOM HARVESTING, WHETHER OR NOT SUCH VEHICLES ARE CONTROLLED OR OPERATED BY THE FARMER.

NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION GAVE STATES THE AUTHORITY TO WAIVE COMMERCIAL DRIVERS LICENSE REQUIREMENTS FOR FARM VEHICLES UNDER THE COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT. UNFORTUNATELY, DOT DID NOT RECOGNIZE WHEN GRANTING THIS WAIVER THAT THE MAJORITY OF THESE PARTICULAR SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL SHIPMENTS WERE CARRIED OUT BY AGRICULTURAL RETAIL OUTLETS, NOT NECESSARILY BY FARMERS.

DOT ALSO FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CUSTOM HARVESTING INDUSTRY, WHICH MANY FARMERS RELY ON TO HARVEST A SEASONAL, PERISHABLE CROP. THIS INDUSTRY IS MARKEDLY DIFFERENT THAN THE COMMERCIAL TRUCKING INDUSTRY. AT LEAST TWO-THIRDS OF THE DRIVING IS DONE OFF-PAVEMENT. THEY DIFFER FROM OTHER "FOR-HIRE" CARRIERS BECAUSE THEY ONLY PROVIDE THE INITIAL TRANSPORTATION OF GRAIN FROM THE FIELD TO STORAGE OR MARKET. THESE TRUCKS AVERAGE AROUND 15,000 MILES PER YEAR, AND ARE SIMPLY NOT IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS OTHER COMMERCIAL TRUCK OPERATIONS THAT MAY AVERAGE OVER 100,000 MILES PER YEAR.

THIS BILL WOULD GO A LONG WAY TO REMOVE THIS INEQUITY. FARM OPERATION COSTS AND RELATED TRANSPORT COSTS ARE SQUEEZING THE FARMER OUT OF BUSINESS. THIS IS NOT AN EXEMPTION FROM THESE COMMERCIAL DRIVERS LICENSE REQUIREMENTS. IT SIMPLY IS A COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO GIVE STATES, WHO HAVE AN EXCELLENT SAFETY RECORD IN THIS AREA, THE ABILITY TO SET REASONABLE REQUIREMENTS.

THE CONDITIONS FOR THE OPERATION OF THESE VEHICLES DIFFER VASTLY FROM THOSE OF OTHER COMMERCIAL, OVER-THE-ROAD CARRIERS. I ENCOURAGE MY COLLEAGUES TO CONSIDER SUPPORTING THIS IMPORTANT LEGISLATION THAT, IF NOT ADOPTED, MAY HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR FARMERS, HARVESTERS AND FARM SUPPLIERS NEXT YEAR.

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